

Friday, July 7, 2006

NTSB Determines that Crew Fatigue Caused Train Collision Near Macdona, Texas



On July 6, the Safety Board determined that, due to fatigue, the engineer and the conductor of a Union Pacific (UP) Railroad train failed to respond appropriately to wayside signals governing the movement of their train, leading to a fatal collision with a BNSF Railway train near Macdona, Texas, on June 28, 2004.

During the derailment, a tank car on the UP train that was loaded with liquefied chlorine was punctured, causing vaporized chlorine to engulf the area. Three people died from the effects of chlorine gas inhalation.

The Safety Board's report examined train crew fatigue and determined that neither the UP engineer nor the conductor made effective use of the time available to them to obtain adequate rest. The Board's report made recommendations to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the UP, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the United Transportation Union regarding the need for adequate rest.

The report also reviewed the safety of tank cars carrying hazardous materials and reiterated recommendations to the FRA from the Minot and Graniteville reports.

NTSB Acting Chairman Rosenker Calls for Increased Use of New Highway Safety Technologies

During a speech at the Meharry-State Farm Alliance National Safety Summit in Washington, DC, Acting Chairman, Mark V. Rosenker said that new technologies must play a vital role in the near future of automobile safety. He also strongly endorsed the panel's efforts to increase seat belt use among all Americans, and especially among minorities.

"The fact remains, crashes don't discriminate," Rosenker said. "Reducing highway deaths for everyone is a top priority at the NTSB," he said.

During his speech, he also discussed accident prevention technologies that can override the human errors that lead to accidents, such as adaptive cruise control and electronic stability control.



Member Hersman Addresses the Transportation Research Forum

Member Deborah A.P. Hersman addressed a meeting of the Washington, DC, chapter of the Transportation Research Forum (TRF) on June 28. The TRF is an organization of transportation professionals who meet to discuss ideas and research addressing transportation public policy. Member Hersman talked to the group about the role that technology can play in improving transportation safety, including the Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System (EGPWS) in aviation, adaptive cruise control in trucking, and switch technology in railroads. She also told the group that fatigue in all modes of transportation is a long-standing issue with the Safety Board and has been cited recently by the Board in investigations of heavy truck crashes, railroad accidents, and commuter rail crashes.